

greater establishment than even the Earl of Warwick could afford. The practice, of maintenance had come in at least thirty years before the reign of Richard the Second, at a time when great armies of retainers were enlisted for the French war.<sup>1</sup> It had been growing ever since, and continued to grow, until in the fifteenth century it was said to be impossible to get justice at all without the support of a lord and his following,\*

Sometimes, indeed, the retainers were little better than professed banditti, and preferred to defy rather than to pervert the course of law. In Cheshire, Lancashire and other franchiser! places where special local privilege rendered the course of royal justice even more difficult than in the rest of England, gentlemen robbers lived in safety, and issued forth at the head of squadrons of cavalry to rob and plunder the midland counties. They murdered men or held them to ransom. They carried off girls to the counties where no constable could follow, married them there by force, and extorted extravagant dowries from the unfortunate parents. But it was not always necessary for violent men to retire with their spoil to a dint ant asylum. They often turned their next-door neighbours out of house and lands, settled there themselves, and gave their victims to understand that if they sued in court they would have their throats cut. Such constant assaults on life and property would have passed without remark in Northumberland, where peace and security had never been known; but to the inhabitants of the midlands it was a new and shocking change for the worse, of which they complained bitterly but ineffectually through the mouths of their parliamentary representatives. The Good Parliament spoke of such disorders as having lately risen anew. It was not unnatural that in the later days of the war, when nearly all our fighting men had been driven back into England, there should be worse breaches of the peace than any known when plunder and license could be more easily obtained across the Channel.<sup>3</sup>

The originators of these mischiefs,  
whether lords and

<sup>1</sup> *Stats. of Realm*, 20 Ed. III., 4, G.

\* *Rot. Parl.*, ii. 42; *P. Pl.*, A, iv, 41.\*. S\* & W\*,  
ii 333, *Rot Parl*, ii. 351, 42, 81, 201.